

LACERTA CROCODILUS.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Corpus tetrapodum, caudatum, nudum.

CHARACTER SPECIFICUS, &c.

LACERTA capite cataphracto, nucha carinata, cauda superne cristis binis lateralibus horrida.

Lin. Syst. Nat. Gmel. p. 1057.

LACERTA cauda compressa ferrata, pedibus tri-
unguiculatis, palmis pentadactylis, plantis
tetradactylis palmatis.

Lin. Syst. Nat. ed. 12. p. 359.

CROCODILUS.

Bellon. aquat. 41. Gesn. quadr. 9. aquat. 304.

Aldr. aquat. 677.

LACERTUS maximus.

Raj. quadr. 761.

Cum Crocodilorum non defint specimina quorum pleraque viginti pedes, nonnulla etiam triginta superant, non est cur miremur calidiorum regionum incolas pro monstris infestissimis illos semper habuisse. Inhabitat Crocodilus Asiam et Africam. Lorica qua tegitur, quæque adulto dura adeo et densa est ut vel glandem plumbeam e scloppetio missam facile

cile repellat, nihil curiosius a natura est elaboratum. In partibus tamen corporis inferioribus multo tenuior et mollior est lorica. Videtur totum animal quasi elegantissime et perfectissime cælatum. Color adulti superior fusco-nigricat, inferior albo-flavescit: crura autem summa, cæteræque nonnullæ partes luteo non sine viriditate quadam variantur. In speciminibus junioribus color corporis superioris fusco-nigricans flavoque pulcherrime commistus inferius fere cum albedine commutatur. Oculi, ut et avibus, membrana nictitante instruuntur. Crocodili juniores nequaquam formidandi sunt, parvi quippe et imbecilli animalia majora non possunt laceffere; minora tantum piscesque depascere soliti: quique in Europam afferuntur ætate minores non modo non feroces sunt, sed etiam nudis manibus impune plerumque tractantur; et vel ob debilitatem seu frigidius cælum, ad foecordiam proni sunt, et fere torpidi. In fervidis autem Africæ regionibus cum ad plenam magnitudinem et vires adoleverit Crocodilus, monstrum vix pejus parere putantur aquæ. Moli enim et robori magna accedit astutia. Juxta fluminum ripas delitescit, canesque et cætera quadrupédia correpta illico ingurgitat: dein in aquas se immergit, locumque imperturbatum nactus quiescit, donec iterum esuriens prædæ cupidine exire impellatur. Hunc prædandi morem exacte imitatur species parvula Britannica, lacerta palustris Linnæi, seu lacerta palustris nigro flavoque variata, quæ quatuor aut quinque uncias longa, insectum unam unciam longum facillime deglutiet; idque unico impetu qui vix oculis percipi possit; primum nempe sese in aquis
paulisper

paulisper librando, cumque intervallum accurate dimensa sit, in infectum infiliendo, dictoque citius devorando. Si igitur parva hæc lacerta, uncias quatuor seu quinque longa, animal quartam vel quintam partem longitudinis suæ æquans illico in stomachum ingurgitare possit, cur Crocodilum miremur octodecim seu viginti pedes longum, canem, vel aliud quodcunque animal eodem modo corripere et deglutire?

Crocodili, ut et aliæ lacertæ, sunt ovipari. Ova in arena deponunt, pullique exclusi illico aquas petunt. Major tamen numerus ab aliis animalibus, ichneumonibus præsertim avibusque comeduntur. Ovum vix anserino majus et in omnibus ovo avis simillimum; crusta calcaria obtectum, cui interius adhæret membrana. Pullis recenter exclusis multo majus est caput pro corpore quam adultis. Ova hæc inter lautissimas delicias ab Afris numerantur, epulisque præcipuis adhibentur. Ab origine hac minima oritur fatale monstrum!

THE CROCODILE.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

Body four-footed, tailed, naked.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER, &c.

LIZARD with mailed head, carinated neck, and tail furnished on the upper part with two lateral crested processes.

The common, or Nilotic CROCODILE.

The Crocodile, so remarkable for its size and powers of destruction, has in all ages been regarded as one of the most noxious animals of the warmer regions. It is a native of Asia and Africa. The size to which it sometimes arrives is prodigious; specimens being frequently seen measuring upwards of twenty feet in length; and there are instances of their exceeding the length of thirty feet. The armour with which the Crocodile is covered may be numbered among the most curious and elaborate pieces of Nature's mechanism. In the full-grown animal this armour, on the upper part of the body, is so strong and thick as easily to repel a musket-ball, On the lower parts it is much thinner, and of a more pliable





pliable nature : the whole animal appears as if ornamented with the most regular and curious carved-work : the color of the full-grown Crocodile is blackish-brown above, and yellowish-white beneath ; while the upper parts of the legs and some other parts are varied with deep yellow, and, in some places not without a tinge of green ; but in the younger animals the color on the upper parts is a beautiful mixture of brown and pale yellow, which on the under parts becomes nearly white. The eyes are provided with a nictitating membrane, as in birds.

Crocodiles in a young state are by no means to be dreaded, since their small size and weakness prevent them from being able to injure any of the larger animals : they therefore content themselves with fish and other small prey ; and the young Crocodiles which are from time to time brought to Europe are so far from being formidable or ferocious that they may generally be handled with impunity, and, either from weakness, or the effect of a cold climate, seem much inclined to torpidity ; but in the glowing regions of Africa, where it arrives at its full strength and power, this animal is justly regarded as the most formidable inhabitant of the rivers. To the great strength and size of the Crocodile is superadded a great degree of subtilty. It lies in wait near the banks of rivers, and snatches dogs and other animals, and swallows them instantly ; then plunges into the flood, and seeks some retired part, where it may lie concealed, till hunger again invites it to its prey. In its manner of attack it is exactly imitated by a
small

small species of water lizard not uncommon in our own country; viz. the *Lacerta palustris* of Linnæus. This animal, which is commonly about four or five inches long, will, with the greatest ease, swallow an insect of more than an inch in length; and that at one single effort, and with a motion so quick, that the eye can scarce pursue it. It poises itself in the water for some moments before, and having gained a convenient distance, springs with the utmost celerity on the insect and swallows it as before mentioned. If therefore a small lizard of four or five inches long can thus instantaneously swallow an animal a fourth part of its own length, we need not wonder that a Crocodile of eighteen or twenty feet, or even much less, should attack and suddenly ingorge a dog or other quadruped.

Crocodiles, like the rest of the *Lacertæ*, are oviparous: they deposit their eggs in the sand, near, or on the banks; and the young when hatched immediately proceed to the water; but the major part of the eggs are commonly devoured by other animals, as Ichneumons, Birds, &c. The egg of the Crocodile is not much larger than that of a goose; and in external appearance bears the most perfect resemblance to the egg of a bird; being covered with a calcarious shell, under which is a membrane. When the young are first excluded the head bears a much larger proportion to the body than when full-grown. The eggs are numbered among the principal delicacies of Africa, and form one of the most favorite repasts. From so small an origin arises this formidable monster I